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BROWNING THE SINGER

by

Elizabeth Margaret Driscoll
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BROWNING THE SINGER

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BROWNING THE SINGER

This study of Browning the Singer will show that Browning struck the vein of genuine poetry, when he went to the depths of man's soul and to the heart of the world for inspiration. There he found the mystery and melody of which Carlyle speaks in "Heroes and Hero-Worship"; and when Browning revealed the secrets buried there, his exalted expression of them raised him to the plane of the true poet. Carlyle said:

"Poetry we will call musical thought, which is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the melody that lies hidden in it; the inmost harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists and has a right to be, here in this world...The poet is he who thinks in that manner." ¹

Yet Browning the greatest literary enigma of this time is called an imposter, a trifler, unworthy, and unintelligible even to-day. In the broad field of English literature there is no more persistent or futile controversy concerning a poet's worth than that which surrounds the name of Robert Browning; and since the argument has continued from the early days of "Pauline" and "Sordello", why has not time placed his name definitely among or apart from those who hold an accredited place in the art of literary or poetic expression? That Browning can still har-

¹ "Hero as Poet".

ass man through the intervening decades, that his memory defies oblivion, can mean but one thing,—that there is found in him a keen power of perception based on Truth, and a deep understanding of Life, which contempt or neglect cannot entirely ignore. For every critic who declares that much of his poetry should have been left in the inkpot, and who, therefore, denies him favor, one equally eminent and discriminating defends and enthrones him beside the inimitable Shakespeare.

The views of both critics we should probably determine to be exaggerated and colored by personal sentiment. It is, then, the part of the reader to approach the study of Browning with no preconceived notions as to his value; rather, let his mind be open to conviction, that he may formulate for himself more fairly his ideas as to whether Browning deserves to be numbered among the greatest expressors of thought. He must, however, be prepared to be tossed about by the waves of conflicting evidence, yet on his guard not to be swallowed up in the vortex of unfounded intolerance. Perhaps, far from relegating him to the limbo of past greatnesses, the reader may perceive a significance in Browning which will increase with the passing of time.

Carlyle has pointed out in his essay on "The Hero as Poet" that in many ancient languages the word for poet and

prophet are the same. Both in their true capacity penetrate the secrets of the universe, discover its meaning, and make known to other men, who have eyes but see not, the beautiful as well as the moral side of life. The "vates", prophet or poet, spends his life next to the heart of things, unessentials having been laid aside as merely a cloak which obscures the vision. Since the divine mystery pervades his soul, he lives ever in the knowledge of it. Others may live in the world as it seems, the "vates" lives in the world as it is. It follows, then, that there is no falseness in the nature of the "vates"; sincerity alone must reign there. When he sees to the heart of things, and sees the beauty and the grandeur that is everywhere, needing only an interpreter to reveal them, he raises his voice to proclaim eternal truth, and to disclose the love, beauty, dignity, and power of the Creator, to which creation testifies.

If the "vates" be poet, he is truly great in proportion to his intellectual prowess, the sincerity of his heart, and the depth of his vision. To the "vates" as poet it is given to understand that, although life seems to be a sequence of unfulfilled longings, man, by ceasing his chase for the rare in the outer world where all things are subject to change and soon forgotten, can form life much

prophet and the sage. But in their more capacity sage-

trust the secrets of the universe. However the pointing,

and make known to others, who have eyes and ears, the

behold, as well as the world of life. The "vision"

prophet or poet, spends his life near to the heart of

things, unaccountably having been told since he was a

child which obscures the vision. Since the vision eye-

very pervades his soul, he lives ever in the knowledge of

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If the "vision" be poet, he is truly great in propor-

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it is given to understand that, although life seems to

be a sequence of unfulfilled longings, and by causing his

chance for the sake in the other world where all things are

subject to change and soon forgotten, can form life which

to his own liking if he will but turn the eye inward, and view what great things are fashioned in the silence of the inner world. It is the poet who reveals the inmost secrets and mysteries of life. It is the poet, the "son of the morning", the heroic figure of all the ages, who appears when in the fulness of time it so pleases nature to produce him. He finds the harmony which is said to exist in the depths of the world and at the centre of the universe; and it is he who hears the music which sounds in every human soul, and which seeks expression through the genius of the artist. All the deep things of life are blended in song; the primal element of us all is song; and the poet, who pries at life, as Browning says, must give voice to that music in song. His tones grow more musical with the depth and greatness of his thought. When indelible records must be traced on the tablets of Time, it is the poet who perpetuates the memory and the glory of the Past.

"That art is greatest," says Ruskin, "which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means, whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, expresses and exalts, the faculty by which it is received."* Elsewhere Ruskin defines great poetry as "the

* "Modern Painters", Vol. I, Ch. 2 Greatness in Art.

suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions. I mean by the noble emotions, those four sacred passions--Love, Veneration, Admiration, and Joy; and their opposites--Hatred, Indignation, Horror, and Grief.¹ If these be the tests of great poetry and great art, then Browning is great, for his works teem with an overwhelming wealth of ideas which have sprung from his imagination to play on the imagination and the emotions of others. His poetry has plumbed the depths of the human emotions, and has shot their poignancy straight to the heart of his readers. It is this imaginative and emotional power which distinguishes Browning as true poet and artist.

Aristotle imposes on the poet who would be adjudged great higher truth and a higher seriousness, the presence of which virtues in their criticism of life marks Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare superior, and the absence of which stamps Chaucer, Pope, and Dryden inferior in the sphere of poetry. Since Browning's themes are deep and serious, for he has drawn his inspiration from the heart of the world and of man, as he discovers and reveals the inner workings of the soul, his poetry bears the unmistakable signs of a sincere and high moral purpose in his effective attempt to study man through the channel of man him-

¹ "Modern Painters", Vol. III, Ch.1. The Grand Style.

... by the imagination, of noble grounds for the
noble emotions. I mean by the noble emotions, those four
noble emotions--love, vegetation, admiration, and joy;
and their opposites--hatred, fear, rejection, horror, and
grief. It is these six the basis of great poetry and great
art, and drawing is great, for the artist sees with an
overwhelming wealth of images which have sprung from his
imagination to play on the imagination and the emotions
of others. His poetry has guided the depths of the hu-
man emotions, and has shot their volcanic energies to
the heart of his readers. It is this imaginative and a-
national power which distinguishes Shakespeare from poets
and artists.

Alas! alas! on the poet who would be satisfied
great higher truth and a higher seriousness, the richness
of which give us in their criticism of life and humanity,
Dante, and Shakespeare superior, and the chance of which
seems to have, hope, and beyond interest in the nature
of poetry. Since Browning's time the deep and serious
for we have drawn his imagination from the heart of the
world and of man, as he discovers and reveals the inner
meanings of the world, his poetry leads the human mind
to a deeper and more fatal purpose in its effort
to understand the world and through the channel of man his-
tory. Robert Browning, Vol. III, Ch. I, The Great Style.

self. Browning believed the poet to be God's glow-worm,¹ flashing its light in the souls of men to reveal the potential exquisiteness of His handwork; he deemed, too, the great function of the creative poet was "to open a way whence the imprisoned splendor may escape, not to affect an entry for a light supposed to be without."² However much Browning may be depreciated and even discredited, a careful analysis shows the depth and music of his thought, though at times it is obscured by digressions and peculiarities of expression which tend to unsettle and confuse. His poetry elucidates and interprets life in all its phases in frequent flashes of exquisite imagery and suggestion. The golden nuggets of wisdom and the strains of wonderful music which he has drawn from the heart of man, and which lie at the core of his poetry waiting to reward the patient delver after treasure, are such as few poets of a succeeding day can surpass, or even equal. Browning lifts man up to a higher level of aspiration and achievement, and by teaching and elevating justifies the existence of the great artist in the world.

Though Browning's works bear the characteristics of the master poet, there are, nevertheless, certain outstanding causes for the coldness and disfavor which rewarded his labor. The diction, movement, and fire of his

¹Browning's poem "Popularity".

²Corson's "Introduction to Browning", Page 27.

well. Browning believed the poet to be God's instrument,
flashing the light in the world of men to reveal the
central spiritualities of his humanity; he regarded, too,
the great function of the creative poet as to open a
way where the imagination might enter any scene, and to
offer an entry for a light supposed to be without.
However much Browning may be disappointed and even dis-
oriented, a careful analysis shows the depth and truth
of his thought, though at times it is obscured by its
excesses and peculiarities of expression which lead to
obscurity and confusion. His poetry is a mixture of in-
finite variety and unity. The golden rule of ex-
pression is in all the phases of his thought, flashes of ex-
quisite imagery and suggestion. The golden rule of ex-
pression and the attitude of wonderful unity which he has
drawn from the heart of man, and which he at the core
of his poetry waiting to reveal the golden rule of ex-
pression, are such as the poet of a whole world may
admire, or even equal. Browning lives man up to his
level of aspiration and achievement, and by reaching
and elevating humanity the existence of the great artist
in the world.

Though Browning's work has the characteristics of
the master poet, there are, nevertheless, certain out-
standing reasons for the confusion and disfavor which he
waited his labor. The confusion, however, and time of his

¹ Browning's poem "Rabbi Ben-Ezra."
² Browning's "Illustration to Browning," p. 17.

art irritated the masses who thought it a bootless quest to search his obscurities for worldly wisdom. Not for them to seek out and draw forth jewels from the depths for their temporal or spiritual adornment as did the fisher of old on the coast of Tyre fish patiently for the purple murex wherewith to beautify the royal garment. Had his art been less high, had every challenge been reduced to a simplicity of language demanding no alertness of mind, had he been capable from the heights of awakening the mentally and spiritually inert, Browning would have delivered a salient message outranking that of any contemporary. But Browning's poetry has been likened to the music of Wagner which seemed dominated by discord to ears accustomed to the melodious music of Beethoven and Mozart. After decades of seemingly complete failure, the judgment of the people has placed Wagner indisputably among the masters, but still questions and withholds Browning's right to similar honor. The reader is compelled to meet and cope with a keen mental, psychological analysis, to follow the leaping thought and discursive style of a mind which heeds no obstacle. Swinburne sums it all up in the following words: "If there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect, it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and in-

and indicated the masses who thought it a poetical quest
to secure the opportunity for worldly wisdom. But for
them to see that the dawn forth gleams from the depths
for their spiritual or spiritual attainment as did the light
of the soul at the onset of the light passing for the way
the masses themselves to identify the royal pathway. The
the masses themselves, had every challenge been rejected
to a simplicity of language demanding no elaborate of
mind. But he has been capable from the heights of ascending
the earthly and earthly things, Browning would have
delivered a simple message concerning that of any con-
sideration. But Browning's poetry has been likened to
the music of Wagner which seemed dominated by the
to have accompanied to the religious music of Bach
and Mozart. After a fashion of seemingly complete fall-
ure, the movement of the people has placed it in the
discovery among the masses. But still persists and
attained Browning's right to similar honor. The reason
it is compelled to exist and cope with a new world.
psychological analysis, to follow the leading thought
and descriptive style of a man which needs no analysis.
Browning stands it all in the following words: "If
there is any great quality more perceptible than any
other in Mr. Browning's intellect, it is his decisive
and inclusive faculty of thought, his awareness and in-

tensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim.....He never thinks but at full speed, and the rate of his thought is to that of another man's as the speed of a railway to that of a wagon, or the speed of a telegraph to that of a railway. It is hopeless to enjoy the charm or apprehend the gist of his writings except with a mind thoroughly alert, an attention awake at all points, a spirit open and ready to be kindled by the contact of the writer's.....The proper mood in which to study for the first time a book of Mr. Browning's is the freshest, clearest, most active mood of the mind in its brightest and keenest hours of work." Few readers are prepared to follow the restlessness and spring of Browning's style, or have the inclination to do so. The saying of Buffon is truly applicable to Browning, "Le style, c'est l'homme." Before making the final charge of obscurity, and pronouncing his stores of knowledge and power hopelessly buried, the reader would do well to ponder the words of Goethe: "He who would charge an author with obscurity should look into his own mind, to know whether it is quite clear there. In the dusk a very distinct handwriting becomes illegible."¹ We are forced to conclude, then, that we appreciate only that which we are prepared to appreciate.

¹Wahrheit und Dichtung.

Blame has rested on Browning for his refusal to place the gripping truths that he has enunciated within men's mental grasp, and for the loss in mental experience and inspiration to the earnest but unsuccessful student. In general, ground yields to the common observation that Browning wrote only for the intellectual aristocrat. The dramatic monologue, which he chose as the medium for his thought, is responsible for much of the difficulty to the understanding of his meaning. Although this form of expression had been used previously, it remained an unfamiliar form until Browning brought it to perfection. The monologue, added to abruptness of style, which was not acknowledged a concomitant of great poetry, left the reader bewildered because of a look, a gesture, or a remark implied, but not expressed. The criticism of obscurity is well based on the fact that Browning has often fallen carelessly into the error of clothing clear thought with complex expression. A greater artist than he would have eliminated these poetic defects and given his verse a polish which would have added much to its clarity without interference with his own peculiar method of thinking. Yet Browning considered the monologue aptly suited to the interpretation of life, the development of character, and all psychological revelations. "The difficulty is," says Mr. Macfadyen, "that much of the apparent obscurity of

Blaise has tested on Browning for his refusal to
accept the existing things that he has manifested within
him a mental grasp, and for his lack in mental endurance
and adaptation to the greatest and unchangeable standard.
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Browning wrote only for the intellectual satisfaction. The
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pression had been used previously, it remained an un-
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language, added to the richness of style, which was not
acknowledged a descendant of great poetry, left the reader
at a distance because of a lack of gesture or a remark
is made, but not expressed. The existence of opportunity
is well based on the fact that Browning has often failed
consciously to the error of claiming great thought with
common expression. A greater artist than he would have
elaborated these poetic details and given the verses a per-
fect which would have added much to his clarity without in-
terference with his own peculiar method of thinking. The
writing considered the language and style added to the in-
terpretation of life, the development of character, and
all psychological revelation. "The difficulty is," says
Dr. Meadman, "that each of the separate elements of

Browning is due to his habit of climbing up a precipice of thought, and then kicking away the ladder by which he climbed."¹ However, in the volume of poems and dramas, under the title of "Bells and Pomegranates", Browning is at the height of imaginative power and art, and the monologues are marked by clearness and precision. Stopford Brooke says of this volume: "Bells of poetry's music, hung side by side with the golden Pomegranates of thought, made the fringe of the robe of this high priest of song. Rarely have imagination and intellect, ideal faith and the sense which handles daily life, passion and quietude, the impulse and self-mastery of an artist, the joy of nature and the fates of men, grave tragedy and noble grotesque, been mingled together more fully--bells for the pleasure and fruit for the food of man."²

Browning's case becomes more significant when we contrast the coldness with which he was received with the sympathetic interest showered at once upon Tennyson. Both figures with their fine spiritual natures appeared at the time when their influence was needed most to point the way to the light amid the increasing darkness of materialism which was beginning to threaten the age. Why was Tennyson borne along in triumph loudly acclaimed, while Browning was denied such approbation and forced to fight distrust and incredulity almost to the end of his

¹S. S. Curry, "Browning and the Dramatic Monologue," Page 81.

²"The Poetry of Robert Browning," Page 5.

Browning is one of the best of all living poets, a true poet of thought, and then living with the latter by which he is called. However, in the volume of poems and essays under the title of "Poetry and the Poet", Browning is at the height of imaginative power and art, and the whole is marked by clearness and originality. It is a book of this volume, "Poetry and the Poet", which has been by side with the golden homages of thought, with the things of the world of this high order of man. It is a book of imagination and intellect, ideal faith and the sense which handles daily life, passion and discipline, the impulse and self-mastery of an artist, the joy of nature and the love of man, grave tragedy and noble escape, does all together more fully than the classic and "The Road to the Road of Man".

Browning's case becomes more significant when we contrast the calmness with which he was received with the sympathetic interest showed at once upon his death. Both classes with their time spiritual nature suggested at the time when their influence was needed most to point the way to the light and the increasing darkness of materialism which was beginning to threaten the age. Why the English born alone in England hardly accepted while Browning was denied such recognition and turned to light of thought and intellect almost to the end of his

life? The answer is clear when we study the poetry of each. Tennyson portrayed affluent English life, scenes, and customs with studied technique and artistry. He made no advance into new or unexplored fields of thought, but re-expressed the existing thought of his time. The appeal of his poetry was soothing, restful, comforting. Browning, on the other hand, struck another and less pleasing note. He undertook to reach man's inner life, to disclose the battles waged there, and to hold up to the glare of penetrating daylight the strength and frailty of man's fallen nature. These were the themes which attracted his analytical mind and required so thorough a mental re-adjustment for comprehension and appreciation.

How salutary was Browning's choice of theme can best be understood by taking a brief survey of the social, industrial, and economic developments of the nineteenth century which produced him. The scientific movement, having introduced radical changes in religious convictions and in modes of living, was precipitating a state of unrest dangerous to the welfare of the people. The use of steam and electricity was increasing, new industries were rising, new sciences were claiming interest, and the new theories which were becoming known, many as shifting as impracticable, were shaking the people from their firm mooring of self-complacency, and launching them without chart or

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compass on an unknown sea. Re-adjustments, physical and mental, to new standards were engendering a skepticism which demanded proofs for truths hitherto accepted. Mysticism and idealism, which had brightened and blessed the lives of a comfortable people, now receded before the onslaught of a virile, sordid materialism. Schopenhauer's doctrine of pessimism became widely disseminated by promoters of the new thought, and optimism was regarded as a myth for the somnolent dotard; justice and charity the Utopian dream of a visionary already out of date. A period of decadency was setting in because of the lamentable disproportion between intellectual and moral progress. The immense strides in mechanical advancement had definitely marked the weakening of moral stamina, and the state in general was drifting into that condition which of old distinguished Greece as aiming at the harmonious development of body and intellect, or stamped Rome as devoting itself to the making of a mighty political fabric. Berdoe in his illuminating book on Browning has characterized well the century thus: "The age was a frivolous, listless, lackadaisical time, when such thought as could be tolerated by our youth was growing daily more pessimistic, less reverent and earnest; well-educated, happily placed men and women began

to ask if life were worth living; and for want of anything to stir their pulses after exhausting their energies in devising new modes of breaking the Ten Commandments one after another, bethought themselves of importing a so-called Buddhism, and cultivating melancholy and atheism. Christianity was declared to be 'played-out', and no longer to be credited by men and women who had passed a science examination or studied Huxley."¹ The people, awakened from their lethargy, found themselves grappling with materialism, seeing only the sorrow and grinding harshness of human life, and found the nearest expression of that life in the words of Job, "Man born of woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. He cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state." An apostle of light was needed to assert the supremacy of soul and will over all other elements, and Browning threw the burden of his magnificent power to the side of spirit.

Browning perceived that the leaders of the new thought were expecting too much from intellectual accomplishments for the moral and social improvement of mankind. The end of man can be known only from his true nature, and only that philosophy which can answer the important questions Whence? and Whither? can sta-

¹Edward Berdoo, "Introduction to Browning", Page 52

to say it life were worth living; and for want of any-
 thing to fill their souls after satisfying their curi-
 osity in devouring the bones of the dead, they turned
 to the living and tried to get the answers of their
 questions. Christianity was declared to be a superstition,
 and no longer to be credited by men and women who had
 passed a college examination or studied history. The
 people, weakened from their infancy, turned to science
 struggling with materialism, seeing only the narrow and
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 experience of this life in the words of Job, "I am
 of earth, living for a short time, is filled with vanity."
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 the mystery of world and all over all other elements,
 and leading from the world of the material to the
 world of spirit.

Science perceived that the leaders of the age
 were not prepared to meet the intellectual re-
 quirements for the world and social advancement of
 the age. The one of the old and new world was
 the world, and only that philosophy which can answer
 the questions of science and religion can answer

bilize society. Browning believed that humanity has been moved by the same passions and aspirations from the beginning of time, and that all true knowledge which will answer aright those questions must be dominated constantly by the will, man's free agent. That most of his great poetry entered the province of metaphysics shows how strongly Browning felt the lack of consideration of this element in current thought, and the inadequacy of the literature of his day in expressing the limits and possibilities of our existence. The poet would have us see and hear with our own senses the deep things of life, and cease to occupy the neutral territory held by the principle of least resistance. Stevenson says: "The Enchanted Ground of dead-alive respectability is next, upon the map, to the Beulah of considerate virtue. But there all slumber and take their rest in the middle of God's beautiful and wonderful universe; the drowsy heads have nodded together in the same position since first their fathers fell asleep; and not even the sound of the last trumpet can wake them to a single active thought. The poet has a hard task before him to stir up such fellows to a sense of their own and other people's principles of life."¹ Had Browning loved his art less, the task would have been too arduous and the neglect of the people too disheartening for any attempt to break down the barrier, but he believed it worth

¹Essay "Walt Whitman".

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Henry "Holt" Holt.

while to spur man on to work for his inheritance in order that he might rightfully claim it. He sang those things which he found at the heart of the world and man for the pure love of the singing, and the joy of helping those who would see.

Matters were made far worse by the popular belief that the sciences held a direct and intimate connection with the prevailing materialism, agnosticism, and atheism of the exponents of science. Like Huxley, Darwin was recognized for his teachings on evolution and agnosticism, not for his extensive biological research, which alone could lay claim to fame; Tyndall was renowned for his materialism, his investigations in the field of physical science overlooked; Haeckel was remembered for his atheism, his study of the lower forms of life forgotten. The utterances of these men on philosophy and religion were regarded as infallible as those they pronounced on the sciences. Their disciples, Carl Vogt, Buechner, Otto Schmidt, and Paul Beret, who carried the theories of their masters to extremes, arrived at conclusions repugnant and destructive to society, morality, and religion. Their final step was a denial of the immortality of the soul, and then even the existence of a personal God.

Browning in his early manhood fell a prey to these pernicious dogmas,¹ yet this error clouded his vision

¹

"Pauline"-Apostrophe to Shelly, the "Sun-treader".

for only a short time. He saw his folly and its consequences, and emerged from the shadow stronger in his belief in the ultimate triumph of spirit. He recognized that the dignity of human existence and true liberty are possible only in the tenets of Christianity, and that divine revelation was the solution to the riddle of life.

It would be illuminating to the doubter to read what one who fell under the sway of irreligion said later on this point in his great Christian poem "The Death in the Desert". The apostle John, who had seen and known the Savior, is dying in the desert, secreted within a cave from his enemies to avoid the persecution which was claiming at that time the blood of innumerable martyrs. While the spark of life is ebbing within his feeble frame, he is disturbed by the thought that he is the last who knew the Savior. The fear that future generations might question his story troubled his anxious mind beyond his ability to express. Before his dimming eyes marched armies of unbelievers and doubters down through the ages, and no man remained who could say, "I have seen," and "I have heard." Overcome by grief, and as if desirous that his last words on earth should be profession of faith in God, John cries out:

"I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the world and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
Would'st thou improve this to re-prove the proved?
Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!"

Browning's voice was not the only one raised in protest against existing conditions. Carlyle, Newman, Arnold, and Ruskin arrayed themselves in the van to combat the declaimers against religion. Carlyle saw that there were corrupting forces at work under the guise of apparent and vaunted prosperity; and that men in their blind selfishness were closing their hearts to the true meaning of life. Ruskin, who filled a conspicuous place as one of the seers of his day, deplored man's negative position in the new scheme of civilization. He expressed his grave concern when he said, "The vastness of the horror of this world's blindness and misery opens upon me."¹ He taught the sacredness of duty and personal obligation to one another, a consideration which neither wealth nor pride could override or obliterate. While Carlyle and Ruskin were urging the quickening of moral power, Newman with his characteristic spiritual insight was attempting to rouse the apathetic from their coma of body and soul. He preached the ascendancy of the spiritual over the material and mechanical, and challenged fearlessly the promulgation of the new thought. He pleaded for the recognition of the nobility of their destiny, and the return to "whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report." Newman's spiritual force was abetted and extended

¹Letter to Charles Eliot Norton in 1862.

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more alive in one of the years of his day, declared men's
negative position in the new scheme of civilization. He
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of the nature of this world's blindness and misery came
upon me. I began the discovery of duty and certain-
ly of it to be the most, a conviction which help-
ed me to find my way out of the darkness of existence.
While Carlyle and Ruskin were fighting the poisoning of
moral power, Newman with his characteristic spiritual
insight was attempting to show the spiritual side of
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spirit over the material and accidental, and the
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and the return to the religious things of the world, which
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by Arnold's intellectual force. As Carlyle preached the gospel of work, and Newman the gospel of spiritual fervor, Arnold preached the gospel of culture. He strove to stir Englishmen to a better consciousness and higher ambition than that stimulated by mere material wealth. "He who works for sweetness and light," says Arnold, "works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even greater!--the passion for making them prevail. It is not satisfied until we all come to a perfect man."¹

The one great element which was lacking, as Browning saw it, in the march of progress was the harmony which calls into play all man's art, wisdom, and power to sustain. Even the ancients recognized this harmony as indispensable to human progress. Socrates, on the memorable day when he drained the hemlock-cup, related to his followers a dream which had recurred to him frequently, but in different forms. He had been urged in the dream to apply himself to the cultivation of music, not to the notes of harmony, but, as he interpreted it, to the harmonizing of order and method in spiritual affairs, to the recognition of an ideal where the good, the true, and the beautiful blend in a concord of sweet music.

To promote this harmony of soul Browning urges the supreme potency of faith and a confidence in divine guidance. A passage in "Paracelsus" illustrates the fervor of his belief:

"I go to prove my soul !
 I see my way as birds their trackless way.
 I shall arrive ! what time, what circuit
 first,
 I ask not: but unless God and His hail
 Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling
 snow,
 In some time, His good time, I shall
 arrive:
 He guides me and the bird. In His good
 time !"

Among the most pernicious doctrines of the newer civilization was one that Browning heartily deplored. In the struggle for existence, the insensibility of body and soul consequent to the stress of poverty had embittered the lives of the poorer classes, and had led them to hold life cheap. Browning, however, believed in the dignity and the nobility of the humblest life; it was a gem of infinite price to be conserved and carefully cherished, and each man possessed within himself the power to make much or little of the inestimable gift. There is no greater wealth than that which the humblest life with its joys, its affections, and its admiration holds, and the possibility of advancement in its good influence over others. Moreover, the melody of life and its poetry are there, bestowed as well on peasant as on knight, ¹ waiting

¹ Herder, "Das Gemeingut der Menschheit." Used later by Goethe in an edition of folk-songs published in 1825.

for the sympathetic touch of the poet to send its vibrations quivering out into the world of men, and often to register harmonies never dreamed of or thought possible. To the poor and depressed Browning addresses these words of buoyant hope in the poem "At the Mermaid":

"Have you found your life distasteful?
 My life did and does smack sweet.
 Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?
 Mine I saved and hold complete.
 Do your joys with age diminish?
 When mine fail me, I'll complain.
 Must in death your daylight finish?
 My sun sets to rise again.

.....

"I find earth not gray but rosy
 Heaven not grim but fair of hue.
 Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
 Do I stand and stare? All's blue."

The poem "Saul" expresses the idea of the richness and beauty of every life. When David sought the tent of the great king, who had not been seen for three days, he found the mighty leader helpless in the throes of a melancholy seizure. Lifeless he hung to the props of the tent, that spirit, at first so beloved of God, powerless now to dam up the floods of its pride, and to assert itself against the power of evil. But David, inspired by his love for Saul, wakes the chords of his harp, and in varied strains tries to rouse the heart of the afflicted king. He passes hopefully from one theme to another, from the pastoral scenes of Saul's childhood

to his present grandeur and fame, reviewing one by one the phases of his life. The poem emphasizes the belief of Carlyle that if we penetrate far enough into the mystery of life, we shall find music and poetry there. At last the melody in the heart of Saul answered the appeal of the music of David, who had begun to sing of the fields of Saul's boyhood, of the harvest and the vineyard, of friendship, of mourning, and of marriage. David then burst forth with the theme of the triumph of life, whose value can be measured only by the reward which God bestows for faithful endeavor.

"How good is man's life, the mere living! how
 fit to employ
 All the heart and the soul and the senses for-
 ever in joy!
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father,
 whose sword thou didst guard
 When he trusted thee forth with the armies,
 for glorious reward?
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother,
 held up as men sung
 The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear
 her faint tongue
 Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let
 one more attest,
 I have lived, seen God's hand through a life-
 time, and all was for best!'"

Browning bade all to remember also that a personal God, the Highest Good, and Love Supreme, was weaving with them into the pattern of life the promise of an eternal day. In "Christmas Eve" Browning utters one of his most consoling and challenging thoughts:

"In youth I looked to these very skies,
 And probing their immensities,
 I found God there, His visible power;
 Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
 Of the power, an equal evidence
 That His love, there too, was the nobler dower,
 For the loving worm within its clod
 Were diviner than a loveless god
 Amid his worlds."

We like to feel that the spark which burst forth with a flame of light in Browning's stronger and more expansive personality caught some of its brilliancy from the courageous spirit of his wife. She, too, strove to alleviate suffering, and shared with Browning his solicitude for the struggling women and helpless children who were being deprived of the decencies of life, and being robbed of their spiritual heritage. Their social and moral welfare was her deep concern. Luxury, never a desirable factor in life, was trailing suffering and degradation to society. The loss of wealth in the happiness of human creatures, the devastation of human sympathy, and the deadly effect of its poison in stopping up the wells of justice and charity, inspired her to plead in words that sting and haunt the cause of the children:

"Do you hear the children weeping, O my
 brothers,
 Ere the sorrow comes with years?
 They are leaning their young heads against
 their mothers,
 And that can not stop their tears.
 The young lambs are bleating in the mead-
 ows,
 The young birds are chirping in their
 nest,

From this Browning passes to the worth of the man who fights during life for growth of character:

"When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er
his head,
Satan looks up between his feet-both tug-
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the
soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through
his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!"

Browning's views on evil differed fundamentally from those of the philosopher Rousseau, one of the great figures of the eighteenth century, who believed vice and error to be extraneous to man's nature, and due to his institutions. This system had the tendency to turn its criticism outward on society, thus relieving the individual from personal responsibility and direct accountability to God. Professor Babbitt has said that Rousseau and his disciple Robespierre were "reformers in the modern sense,--that is they are concerned not with reforming themselves but other men. Inasmuch as there is no conflict between good and evil in the breast of the beautiful soul, he is free to devote all his efforts to the improvement of mankind."¹ This is directly opposed to Browning's belief that evil is no abstraction at work outside man's self, conspiring to wreck his happiness. It lies in man's

¹Professor Irving Babbitt, "Rousseau and Romanticism",
Page 136.

corrupt nature, and works outward into the actualities of life. Evil is a reality stifling every good impulse; and, if uncontrolled, tends to break down moral fibre. He has interpreted perfectly and has spent the power of his art in emphasizing the metaphor of the ancients which describes the soul as a charioteer driving two steeds; "the one leaning and pressing heavily to earth, seeking the baser things of life; the other beautiful and noble, straining for the heights of soul-life; and well trained must be the charioteer who can govern his steeds and bend them to his will, who can hold the human in subjection to the spiritual."¹

Browning has crystallized many gems of thought and wisdom in his poems, the contemplation of which causes man's heart to leap to the Infinite. His message on the vain striving for achievement in this world evokes a universally sympathetic response from every soul. He assures us that what seems failure in this world is only suspended good, and that our deeds, our aspirations, freighted with honesty of purpose, are registered to our glory in eternity. The obstacles to many a worthy action have caused disappointment, discouragement, and apparently dismal failure. It seems that God is unwilling to accept the deed, perfect as we will it, but chooses rather the unfinished, the imperfect act, as the consummation of a

¹Attributed to Plato.

perfect intention. But the value is not lost, for

"Each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world."

All that matters is the heart, the thought, and the purity of intention which motivates the act. The rest God, in His completeness and in His love, makes up to reward our confidence and endeavor.

"Thus looking within and around me, I
ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending
upraises it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to
God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb
to His feet."

Such are the words which fell on the ears of King Saul from David's lips, and which convey one of the loftiest sentiments in Browning's poetry. The standard is what we have tried to do, not what we have actually achieved. No act, no intention, is ever overlooked, "Never star was lost here but it rose afar!"¹ Browning has mentioned the same idea of the inefficacy of man's striving in "Andrea del Sarto", also, whose painting, though technically perfect, yet lacks that touch of soul which places the art of Rafael and Agnolo, though inferior to his own, above it. In this poem Browning says:

"In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat--somewhat, too, the
power--
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes."

¹Browning's poem "Waring".

One of the best lessons which Browning teaches is that expressed in the short poem "Apparent Failure". He has taken the occasion of a visit to a Paris morgue on the banks of the Seine to illustrate the virtue of charitable interpretation on the act of a fellow-man. Browning is viewing with sympathy the pathetic figures of three men stretched out on their copper couches, defeated and submerged in the maelstrom of life. It was the age-old conflict between body and soul, the last success of that steed which bears its mate earthward. Adversity and disappointment had crushed their spirits, strangled their ambition; companionship had failed to warm their energies into courage and cheer; they had ignominiously laid down the burden under which they labored. In the last stanza of this poem Browning makes his stand clear, that judgment rests with their Creator, not with us, as self-appointed judges, to weigh the enormity of their guilt, or pronounce sentence. He makes no unkind interpretation, and draws no swift conclusion from the last desperate act of the wretched victims. He breathes a prayer that the blessing God bestows on man at his birth, He will confirm at his death. In "Apparent Failure" the poet says:

"It's wiser being good than bad;
 It's safer being meek than fierce:
 It's fitter being sane than mad.
 My own hope is, a sun will pierce

The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
 That, after Last, returns the First,
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;
 That what began best, can't end worst,
 Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst,"

Browning's well known poem Abt Vogler tells of the power of Art to help man to the highest form of self-expression. "Abt Vogler" suggests also that beyond the commonplaces of this world a realm of freedom of mind and soul beckons through the portal of Art, man's finest expression of Beauty and Truth. All the civilization, industry, and wealth of our complex world are calling children of genius to other activities and leaving the highest reaches of art and its sublime influence neglected. "Genius", says Hugo, "is a promontory jutting out into the infinite." If this is so, the genius of music and of poetry, fired with the inspiration to sing, may take his stand on that outlook and explain to man the infinitude within himself. Souls have always been few to whom God has given the power to reveal Himself, yet, by wafting the whisper of Heaven into the hearts of men, the power of those individuals has been mighty in swaying turbulent spirits and calming violent storms of passion. Such is the impression which we glean from Browning's poem "Abt Vogler". The musician, in closest alliance with God, seated at the instrument of his own building, strikes the single keys first, and then the

combined notes that are united in one grand symphony. On wings of his imagination he is carried into a world of fancy and dwells in ecstasy on his dreams. The music finds its way into the deepest places of the musician's soul and awakens memories that linger in the recesses of his brain. The music dies away, the rapture of spirit and the triumph of art have passed, his dream city has vanished, and regretfully he lives again amid the mediocrity of this world. But those wondrous chords, though conceived and lost in the discord of Time, are waiting in Eternity for him who called them into being.

"There shall never be one lost good! What
 was shall live as before;
 The evil is null, is naught, is silence
 implying sound;
 What was good shall be good, with, for evil,
 so much good more;
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the
 heaven a perfect round."

What comfort and re-assurance to the artist that all beauty created by him shall meet him again and welcome him in a triumphant Future! Then the vain yearnings of the spirit for fullest expression, the fierce striving of genius for completeness, though limited in power by its earthly deficiency, will encounter no barrier to perfection as conceived in the soul of the artist.

"All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good
 shall exist;
 Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, no
 good, nor power
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives
 for the melodist
 When eternity affirms the conception of an
 hour."

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 On wings of his imagination he is carried into a world
 of fancy and beauty in ecstasy on his dreams. The
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 where a soul and sensitive memories that linger in the
 recesses of his brain. The music dies away, the fan-
 tasy of spirit and the triumph of art have passed, his
 dream city has vanished, and mysteriously he lives again
 with the reality of this world. But those wonderful
 chords, though conceived and lost in the dream of
 life, are waiting in Eternity for him who called them
 into being.

"There shall never be one last word; that
 was what I live at; that
 The will is still, the music, the silence
 That was good shall be good, with, for all,
 as much good more;
 On the earth the broken story; in the
 heaven a perfect round."

What comfort and re-assurance to the artist that all
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 him in a triumphant return! Then the vain yearning
 of the spirit for fullest expression, the desire for
 the perfect for completeness, though limited in power
 by the earthly limitations, will encounter no barrier to
 perfection or concealment in the soul of the artist.

"All we have will be used or stored or shared of good
 shall be left;
 Not in silence, but in life; no beauty, no
 good, nor power
 whose voice has gone forth, but each survives
 for the relief
 When eternity lifts the revelation of an
 hour."

Emerson says in one of his essays, "One of the illusions of life is that the present hour is not the critical, decisive hour." Browning corroborates this thought in "The Last Ride To-gether", where he shows his disdain for the weakness of will which makes it impossible for man to face the present and suffer its distress. If the power is given to man to conquer himself, and shape his destiny, this ability should inspire courage for the present as well as confidence for the future. Even at the cost of present pain, the self-reliant, trustful man presses on and understands that pleasure is not the only or the highest good, that obstacles can be turned into rounds up the ladder of progress. "The Last Ride To-gether" tells the story of a lover who, with neither bitterness nor vindictiveness, is parting at the end of the ride with the woman of his choice. Indeed, he accepts the disappointment almost with gratitude, as an opportunity offered to prove his courage. With her love life would have been complete, in itself not a perfect good, and would defeat the purpose of completeness in the future life. It is worthy of note that Browning feels strongly that the truly great man never hopes to achieve his ideal in a world marked essentially by its limitations. He says in this poem:

"Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being--had I signed the bond--
Still one must lead some life beyond,

The same year in one of his letters, "The

Allegation of first is that the government was to get

out of the "unstable house," "the house of the

children in "The Last Side To-gether," where the

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be established. It was the first time to get the

Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.
 This foot once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I descry such? Try and test!
 I sink back shuddering from the quest.
 Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?"

Browning's philosophy in this instance was one with which Tennyson could not concur. While the lover in "The Last Ride Together" emerges from his trial a new man of resolution, the young soldier of whom Tennyson speaks in "Locksley Hall" looks at life from another angle. His intention has been thwarted by his cousin's faithlessness to the vow she made him. Cursing his fate, he blusters and vents his fury on all who have contributed to his unhappiness. Looking into the future "far as human eye can see", begging Mother-Age to hide him from his deep emotion and desolation of spirit, he says:

"So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping thro'
 me left me dry,
 Left me with the palsied heart, and left me
 with the jaundiced eye."

It is a wretched picture, indeed, which Tennyson has given us of the rejected lover. In comparison to this view, that of Browning excites an admiration all the greater for the opposite extreme to which sentiment may run. Only a Browning, of all the poets of his age, would have faced the issue with the determination which he showed, grappling with the problems of the present, and solving them in the present, as far as the power within him lay. Tennyson, on the other hand, looked to

a betterment of conditions in the far-distant future, where, he hoped, all evil would disappear in the final adjustment of things. "In Memoriam" expresses this idea:

"Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt and taints of blood."

Browning believed that body and soul marched onward, side by side, in the turmoil of life from birth to death, co-combatants in the battle of life, each sharing the victories and defeats of the other, each responsible at the close of life for a final, exact account. He could not have given to the world a nobler lesson in fortitude and courage, nor a better example of the clearness and directness of his vision, than this sentiment found in the poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra". Many poets have striven to express their philosophy of life, to correlate its comedies and tragedies, its lights and shadows, with varying degrees of success; with hearts trusting in the future, they have endeavored to fit the finite to the infinite scheme of the Creator with an inspiration that has been edifying and enduring. Some, however, have lacked a fulness of perception in viewing life, and have missed its significance at the most vital points. Browning has solved many of its mysteries because he has seen through the problem to the end. Everywhere he

a betterment of conditions in the far-distant future,
where, he hoped, all evil would disappear in the final
adjustment of things. "The New World" expressed this ideal

"Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To purge of nature, some of will,
To purge of doubt and stains of blood."

Howling believed that body and soul reached an-
other side by side, in the turmoil of life from birth to
death, co-combatants in the battle of life, each showing
the virtues and defects of the other, each responsible
at the close of life for a final, exact account. He
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fortitude and courage, nor a better example of the clear-
ness and directness of his vision, than this sentiment
found in the poem "Rebel Ben Hur". Many poets have
striven to express their philosophy of life, to correlate
its sorrows and its glories, its light and shadow, with
varying degrees of success; with hearts purified in the
future, they have endeavored to fill the minds of the
infinite spheres of the Creator with an inspiration that
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Howling has solved many of its mysteries because he
has seen through the problem to the end. Everywhere he

sees in the gloom love dominating, love human and divine, a spark thrown out from the forge of God to light up the world. Browning says of the triumph of body with soul:

"Let us not always say,
'Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon
the whole!'
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,
than flesh helps soul!'"

Among Browning's most consoling beliefs is the sanctity of old-age, from which human nature too often shrinks unreasonably. Browning bestowed on age the dignity which many of the greatest poets have failed to recognize. Kipling views the last years of man's life with neither cheerfulness nor re-assurance. Rather is his pronouncement in "The Old Men" one of abhorrence at the unlovely picture of the old man as it presents itself to his imagination.

"The Lamp of our Youth will be utterly out,
but we shall subsist on the smell of it;
And whatever we do, we shall fold our hands
and suck our gums and think well of it."

With characteristic serenity and resignation, Emerson takes another view in "Terminus", of not an especially lofty nature, yet one infinitely more pleasant than that of Kipling. As he greets old-age, Emerson says:

"As the bird trims her to the gale,
I trim myself to the storm of time,
I man the rudder, reef the sail,
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:
Right onward drive unharmed;
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,
And every wave is charmed."

seen in the light love destination, love human and divine,
a spirit shines out from the force of God to light up the
world. Browning says of the trinity of body with soul:

"Let us not always say,
'Soul of this flesh to-day'
I grope, make head, gained ground upon
The whole;
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, not half-halo flesh wings, now,
When flesh helps soul!'"

James Browning's most convincing belief is the
sanctity of old-age, from which human nature has often
been unjustly banished. Browning has shown on one side
the many of the greatest poets have failed
to recognize. Keats lived the last years of his
life with neither cheerfulness nor reassurance. Help-
er is his pronouncement in "The Old Man," one of those
poems at the wistfully picture of the old man as he pre-
sents itself to his imagination.

"The lamp of our youth will be extinguish out,
but we shall submit on the walls of it;
And whatever we do, we shall find our hands
and such our arms and their will of it."

With characteristic severity and imagination, Browning
takes another view in "Tartarus," of not an especially
lofty nature, yet one infinitely more elegant than
that of Keats. As he grows old-age, Browning says:

"As the bird brings her to the mate,
I bring myself to the state of time,
I was the mother, now the self,
Over the voice of eye played at prime;
That seemed alive unthought;
The road, well worth the price, is near,
And every way is chosen."

Matthew Arnold has expressed in his poem "Growing Old" his idea of advancing age with an attitude which lacks the magnanimity of Emerson, and the irreverence of Kipling; but, on the other hand, suggests a bitterness of spirit that seems incompatible with age itself. To Arnold age is an unworthy end to man's career. He considers the old man as only a "hollow ghost" of his former self, filled with resentment and vague longing. The old man possesses none of the mellowness of spirit which long life should inevitably bring, and none of the power of prophecy which obviously age alone can claim as a proper part of its very nature. The suffering and dread of those last years are best told by Arnold in the following lines:

"It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

"It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly what we feel,
Deep in our heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion--none."

The atrophy of brain and the insensibility of heart which distinguishes Arnold's conception of old age are far from being those qualities which Longfellow deems the attributes of the end of life. He indulges, moreover, neither in the mockery of Kipling nor in the

Whether Arnold has succeeded in his poem "Growing Old" is a question of advancing age with an attitude which takes the responsibility of the poem, and the importance of the thing; but, on the other hand, suggests a criticism of spirit that seems incompatible with age itself. To Arnold age is an unworthy end to man's career. He compares the old man to only a "belated ghost" of his former self, filled with resentment and vague loneliness. The old man possesses none of the richness of spirit which young life should inevitably bring, and none of the power of prophecy which obviously age alone can claim as a proper part of its very nature. The suffering and threat of those last years are best told by Arnold in the following lines:

"It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, unnumbered
To the hot wisdom of the present, months
To months with weary pain."

"It is to suffer later,
And feel but half, and feebly what we feel;
Deep in our hearts
To sense the dull transience of a change,
But no emotion--none."

The story of pain and the inevitability of heart which distinguishes Arnold's conception of old age are far from being those qualities which loneliness, absent the attraction of the end of life. He indicates, moreover, neither in the mystery of Milton nor in the

quiet acquiescence of Emerson, though Longfellow's idea approaches that of the latter more closely. However, "Morituri Salutamus" goes beyond this calm acceptance of the inevitable, and imbues age with an importance equal to youth's.

"For age is opportunity no less
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away
The sky is filled with stars invisible by day."

Thus Longfellow mantles age with a glow of warmth and a wealth of power that forbids the intrusion of the thought that the faculties must weaken and the soul grow numb. The calm of age is not insensibility, but often the fullest realization at last of the reason for creation. As false ideals are deemed the danger of youth, no ideals are considered the danger of old age; but Longfellow attributes no such faultiness to man's declining years. Again, Dr. Stanley Hall interprets age as an exalted state which none need fear or condemn. The cumulative power and wisdom of a lifetime of experience mark his words. He states: "The function of age is to finish a structure that still lacks an upper story and gives it an outlook or conning tower from which man can see more clearly the far horizons and take his bearings now and then by the eternal stars."

The foregoing estimates of old age show how far Browning's view has surpassed those of great poets of

which resembles of Emerson, though Lowell's is more
approaches that of the latter more closely. However,
"Mystical Philosophy" goes beyond this and reaches at
the ineffable, and knows eye with an inward vision
to the soul.

"For me, as opportunity no less
than soul itself, there is no other power,
and to the extent of this power
the eye is filled with a divine radiance."

Thus Emerson's mystic eye with a glow of white and
vision of power that torments the intellect of the thought
that the intellect must weaken and the soul grow numb.
The eye of the eye is not inwardly, but often the soul
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are considered the danger of the eye; but Lowell's
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Mystic, Dr. Stanley Hall interprets eye as an inward
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the eye of a vision of a vision of a vision of a vision
of the eye. He states: "The vision of the eye is to finish a
structure that still lacks an outer story and ends in
an outer story of common sense from which we can see more
clearly the far horizon and take the distance more
than by the external eye."

The foregoing sketches of the eye show how far
Emerson's view has surpassed that of great poets of

no mean mental keenness or spiritual insight, but whose vision on this point is dimmed or darkened altogether by a miasma of distorted values. The memory of the poet who conceived the poem "Rabbi Ben Ezra" will pass safely down the years as long as that poem exists. In contrast he stands out in the fullness of sane perception and shining truth. The nimbus about the head of Browning's aged man is the reflection of the glory and holiness of the approaching Master. In God's plan old age is the noble consummation of life, and Browning embraces it as such, nor tries with aversion to crowd it out of its natural place. His philosophy concerning the different stages of life from youth onward up to age is equally worthy and inspiring. He views life as a whole in the opening stanza:

"Grow old along with me!
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was
 made;
 Our times are in his hand
 Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half; trust God: "see all,
 nor be afraid'."

Youth, on whose beauty all poets agree, and of which they sing with universal concord, engages next the interest of Browning. He believes that youth with uncertain steps stumbles on, stimulated by the fire of ambition within, yet is incapable of steering its course with confidence. Every call to action, every stir of

no more mental knowledge or spiritual insight, but whose vision on this point is dimmed or darkened altogether by a vision of distorted values. The memory of the past who conceived the word "Nihilism" will have said that the years ahead as they pass exist. In contrast he stands out in the fullness of some perception and shining truth. The mind about the head of Browning's aged man is the reflection of the glory and majesty of the approaching Master. In God's plan and in the noble consummation of life, and Browning answers it as such. Now, then, with attention to what is out of the natural place. His philosophy concerning the different stages of life from youth onward up to age is equally worthy and inspiring. He views life as a whole in the opening chapter:

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was
waste;
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,
nor be afraid!'"

Youth, on whose beauty all poets agree, and all which they view with universal concord, comes next the interest of Browning. He believes that youth with uncertainty stands amidst or, enlightened by the al-
ambition within, yet is incapable of steering its course with confidence. Every call to action, every wish of

the emotions brings the realization that there is a spark animating the clod; every thwarted desire, every doubt, adversity, and failure may be welcomed as the means by which the soul must climb to greater heights.

"For thence,--a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,--
Shall life succeed in that it seems to
fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me!
A brute I might have been, but would not
sink i' the scale."

As years pass on and life has been enriched by the fruits of Time, the rush of existence grows less, and leisure gradually follows for reflection and self-appraisal. Man looks back on life as it has been his to live, and glimpses a light where impenetrable darkness seemed to reign. The scroll of life has been unrolling, and he sees for the first time that the way which, to his sightless eyes was so hopelessly crooked and winding, was but the straight path to the happiness for which man was created. With the strain of early life behind him, and the rough places made smooth, he steadfastly turns to the future and settles himself for advancing years, no longer yielding to the tempting and venturesome exploits of youth.

"As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found
made:
So, better, age, exempt

the emotions behind the realization that there is a
 great something in life: every thwarted desire, every
 doubt, adversity, and failure may be welcomed as the
 means by which the soul must climb to greater heights.

"For I know,--a paradox
 Which comforts while it mocks,--
 Shall life answer in that it seems to
 Tell:
 What I aspired to be,
 And was not, comforts me;
 A truth I might have seen, but would not
 Stop at the scale."

A year has passed and life has been enriched by the
 fruits of time, the truth of existence grows less, and
 fortune gradually follows her reflection and self-
 interest. Man looks back on life as it has been his to
 live, and glimpses a light where impenetrable darkness
 seemed to reign. The scroll of life has been unrolling,
 and he sees for the first time that the way which, to him,
 at least, was so hopelessly crooked and winding, was
 but the straight path to the happiness for which he was
 created. With the strain of early life behind him, and
 the rough places made smooth, he gratefully turns to
 the future and settles himself for serene repose, no
 longer yielding to the temptation and venturous exploit

of youth.

"As it was better youth
 Should strive, through pain and doubt,
 To find the path, when reason on right found
 The way:
 No better, now, to stray."

From strife, should know, than tempt
 Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death
 nor be afraid!"

The last stage of this poem pictures the old man at the end of life, waiting for the last great call to action. Gone are the disdain of youth and the self-confidence of manhood; spent is the term of earthly probation; life's ills and disappointments have assumed a hitherto unrecognized meaning; and he sees that they intimate his divine origin and destiny. He has borne the heat and burden of the day, yet has seen many a soul fall by the wayside under its weight, and find relief from earth's cares in the arms of death. The world in all its immensity is not vast enough to satisfy lofty aims and endeavors; the treasures, wonders, and pleasures of earth not alluring enough to appease the innate longing of his heart. There is a constant yearning and reaching out for a nameless, indescribable something that Browning has interpreted to mean heaven, "a man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a heaven for." The old man, blessed with years, has realized this truth, and that longing of the heart is for complete life which he will experience when death comes. Thus he waits with trust for its approach to usher him into a brighter to-morrow. Browning has compared our life to the clay in the hands of the potter, or to a cup whose base is richly embossed

and carved intricately with all the skill and subtlety of the artist. This part of the cup he likens to the feverish activity of youth, playing, venturing, whirling in the dance of life as the cup spins dizzily on the wheel. But the complexity of life vanishes with the years, and at its close resolves itself into the beauty of simplicity. This time of life Browning symbolizes by the rim of the cup, which, though plain, is beautiful, and to which the greatest honor is given, for to the rim of the cup the Master touches His lips. The undying beauty of Browning's thought has the power to lift souls on the mighty pinions of its song, and bear them bound back to the portals of Heaven. He says:

"Look not thou down but up!
 To uses of a cup,
 The festal board, lamp's flash and
 trumpet's peal,
 The new wine's foaming flow,
 The Master's lips aglow!
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst
 thou with earth's wheel?

.....

"So, take and use thy work:
 Amend what flaws may lurk,
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings
 past the aim!
 My times be in thy hand!
 Perfect the cup as planned!
 Let age approve of youth, and death
 complete the same!"

One of the most triumphant and sublime passages in Browning's poetry proclaims the doctrine of the Incarnation. In the poems "Saul" and "Paracelsus"

there is expressed the realization of this great Christian mystery, which bears so closely on man's relationship to his Creator and to the future life. David, the unlettered shepherd, as he sings rapturously to Saul a song of unconscious inspiration, gropes for the magic note that will thrill every member of the insensible king back to life. At last, as his fancy has run the gamut of all natural themes, he hesitates; then, with sudden inspiration, he leaves the world of nature, and his song rises on the wings of soul. In an instant David has grasped one of the most abstruse problems that still darken man's reason, and he sings:

"'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for!
 my flesh that I seek
 In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul,
 it shall be
 A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man
 like to me
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a
 Hand like this hand
 Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!
 See the Christ stand!"

Another beautiful thought that Browning has given us in regard to the Incarnation of Christ is that found in the words of the dying Aprile in "Paracelsus". It bears to mortals the solacing thought that Christ was born, suffered, and died on earth because of His love and sympathy for the lot of mankind. Had the case been otherwise, the New Law would have been more imperfect than the Old. Thus, that He might draw nearer to His

creatures, reveal Himself more fully to man, and enter more closely into union with him, the Creator took on human nature, clothed Himself in the flesh, lest the souls of succeeding ages weaken for a visible, tangible manifestation of His presence. So Aprile teaches that God is love and sympathy as well:

"Man's weakness is his glory--for the strength
Which raises him to heaven and near God's self
Came spite of it: God's strength his glory is,
For thence came with our weakness sympathy,
Which brought God down to earth, a man like us!"

One last word of love and sympathy lingers with us on this demonstration of God's nearness to man. Browning relates in "An Epistle, Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish the Arab Physician", the incident of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. On his journey into Judaea the physician has witnessed the miracle, performed by a Nazarene physician, as he deems Christ to be. With all the ingenuity and sagacity of the Eastern mind, he strives to reconcile what he has seen with the laws of nature, yet only increasing doubt and wonder repay his efforts. He will write to Ahib his friend, relate the strange story, and then dismiss the matter from his mind. But the memory of Lazarus as he saw him haunts him, and involuntarily he reverts in the letter to the miracle which troubles him with unceasing persistence. Lazarus has proclaimed the Nazarene "God", and through the mind of Karshish steals the unbid-

den thought that perhaps he has witnessed a manifestation of God and His power, and that Lazarus is right. In answer to his musings he murmurs: "It is strange." The closing words of the poem are a plea to man to bestow his love on God; and Karshish with new insight cries:

'The very God! Think, Ahib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too--
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
'Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
'Thou hast no power, nor mayst conceive of
mine,
'But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
'And thou must love me who have died for
thee!'

The madman saith He said so: it is strange."

The views of Browning on the last ordeal of man, the meeting with the angel of Death, bears the same stamp of militancy and of optimism as the rest of his poetry. As a prelude to his great fight, he sums up in the "Epilogue to Asolando" his attitude towards life and his belief in immortality. Reflection had so directed his reason that he was convinced that man's noble aspirations, intense desires, and heavenly ideals, would be fruitless if not prophetic of an ultimate state of completion. In his mind and heart rested the most captivating and blessed of all wisdom given to man. Browning deserves to be remembered as

"One who never turned his back, but marched
 breast forward,
 Never doubted clouds would break,
 Never dreamed, the right were worsted, wrong
 would triumph,
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight
 better,
 Sleep to wake."

As an imaginative poet every word that Browning has written bears a hidden meaning that often gradually unfolds to the understanding, but no such uncertainty envelops the poem "Prospice". In this poem of power and discernment he displays his greatness of mind and his understanding of the significance of Death. He begs to face the Arch Fear with unflinching spirit for the supreme struggle, and prays that his senses be alive to the consciousness befitting the dignity of his last stand. In the grip of Death he longs for the power to fight with wide-open eyes and conquer in the last black minute of the strife. Horrible indeed does it seem to that mighty soul that Death should steal upon him un-awares; and, unweaving the bands of mortality which still bind him to earth, he should then sink into a languor that is the forerunner of death. Nothing could be worse in Browning's mind than that he should close his unconscious eyes to the world, to open them to God and to eternity. That he should be borne down the river of Life, sailing calmly into an unknown port, has no part in his desires, but rather that he meet Death in a last valiant

fight that will prove him worthy of the fulfillment of the promises and hopes of life. "Prospice" expresses in a few lines the undercurrent of his philosophy of life:

"I was ever a fighter, so--one fight more,
 The best and the last!
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes,
 and forebore,
 And bade me creep past.
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare
 like my peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's
 arrears
 Of pain, darkness, and cold."

"Old Pictures in Florence" expresses Browning's theory of human development in this world where God has permitted faultiness to enter, since we are destined for the state of perfection only in another existence after a lifetime of toil. The purpose of life is, therefore, not perfection, which, like its symbol Greek art, perishes in Time, but growth toward perfection in Eternity according to God's plan.

"'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be
 leaven--
 The better! What's come to perfection
 perishes.
 Things learned on earth, we shall
 practise in heaven:
 Works done least rapidly, Art most
 cherishes."

After establishing the point of the undesirability of perfection here, Browning then takes issue with many in their belief that the human struggle in this world,

so painful and futile, continues in the next existence after death, and that right and wrong, rich and poor, strong and weak contend as of old, both sides counting losses and gains to their records. The view is not substantiated by the facts of life, as Browning comprehends them, for such a view postulates in a complete world the incompleteness of human vision. He says that after the soul has rested on faith in this world, and has experienced that good is better than evil, the uses of labor, as God designed it, are past, that trouble ends, and we rest at last in final contented perfection. As Browning interprets the view of those who differ from him, it is this:

"There's a fancy some lean to and others
hate--
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary,
loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's
congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in
small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's
all."

To such as hold this view, Browning opposes his larger thought:

"When a soul has seen
 By the means of Evil that Good is best,
 And, through earth and its noise, what is
 heaven's serene,--
 When our faith in the same has stood the
 test--

Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
 The uses of labor are surely done;
 There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
 And I have had troubles enough, for one."

"Rephan" contrasts the contentment and serenity in the state of man before his existence on earth and the state of happiness which man has earned by his successful struggle in life, and to which he passes when death comes. The condition of the soul in the Star of the God Rephan knows no growth and no change, but resolves itself into a condition of inertia and hopeless stagnation. As to the length of time the soul has inhabited that Star, and lived in the state of the neutral Best, Browning ventures no answer, but he describes life there in the following words:

"How long
 I stagnated there where weak and strong,
 The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,
 "Are merged alike in a neutral Best,
 Can I tell? No more than at whose behest
 The passion arose in my passive breast,
 "And I yearned for no sameness but difference
 In thing and thing."

In response to the longing of the soul for movement and change, prime Potency releases it from its state of monotonous perfection, grants its wish for existence in another world of lesser contentment where strife and suffering, not rest, would be the measure of happiness and reward. In the last stanzas of the poem Browning

has designated earth as the place to which the soul aspires that it may share in the hopes, fears, and agony of men. In the restless desire for change, the soul has expanded beyond the limits of Rephan, and it comes to take up its abode on earth, willing to strive because of a belief in a higher state of hard-earned happiness where right will triumph after the success of evil in the world.

"For you doubt, you hope, O men,
You fear, you agonize, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

"Have you no assurance that, earth at end,
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend?

"Why should I speak? You divine the test.
When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast
A voice said, "So wouldst thou strive, not
rest?

"Burn and not smoulder, win thy worth,
Not rest content with a wealth that's dearth?
Thou art past Rephan, thy place be Earth!"

Thus Browning rejects the idea of happiness which has not been fought for, and bestowed on a soul for its deliberate choice of right over wrong. An inheritance to be rightly possessed must be truly earned.

The world which Browning describes in "Reverie" is a world dominated by the three great factors, Intelligence, Power, and Love. He pictures a day when Power shall triumph, and shall show man not only his own heritage but that of all the world. Thus Power

will join with first Knowledge; and the mind, under the control of both, will soar upward, helped by the body to applaud Omnipotence. Then Browning stresses again the good and evil in life struggling for supremacy:

"Head praises, but heart refrains
From loving's acknowledgment.
Whole losses outweigh half-gains:
Earth's good is with evil blent:
Good struggles but evil reigns."

At first evil appears as a cloud across the orb of good, but evil finally prevails so steadily that the mind calls on Power to liberate good from the trammels of evil that the two forces may fight at least equally; but the three forces of the universe are now at strife among themselves, Knowledge, Power, and Love, each contending for its place as allotted in the scheme of creation. Browning looks above and beyond the confusion of life where Power will be Love, and rule, and have its way. It is best, then, for man to know that

"Life is--to wake not sleep,
Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where blindly creep
Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

"Where, amid what strifes and storms
May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love--transports, transforms
Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.

.....

"When see? When there dawns a day,
 If not on the homely earth,
 Then yonder, worlds away,
 Where the strange and new have birth,
 And Power comes full in play."

One of Browning's many expressions of belief in immortality forms the theme of "La Saisiaz", a poem written on the sudden death of a friend. Although the friend is dead, the poet keeps his part of the appointment to climb a mountain with her. As he stands alone on the height, grief overwhelms Browning temporarily, and obstructs the sanity of his thought. Doubts arise in his mind as to the end of man's life on earth. Christian philosophy furnishes at length the comfort and guidance which he seeks. As he muses and questions concerning the future life, whether the soul survives the body, and whether God really exists, his mind revolts against the suggestion that death is the end of soul as well as body, and that merely a memory remains as the transient record of a life that once was. To this thought his soul answers consistently that the first life must claim a second, else the good in life holds no gain. Again, the poet is filled with doubt whether a soul, to whom life has been a sad and heavy burden, may look for a supplemental happiness after death; for the thought has presented itself that life may be a curse imposed on man without the promise of future reward, or a "load he stumbles under through his glad, sad seventy years."

Life to its fullest term of time must be borne under pain of punishment in the world to come, Browning says, where man's portion will be in accordance with the nature of his earthly existence.

"Certainly as God exists,
As He made man's soul, as soul is quenchless
by the deathly mists,
Yet is, all the same, forbidden premature
escape from time
To eternity's provided purer air and brighter
clime,-
Just so certainly depends it on the use to
which man turns
Earth, the good or evil done there, whether
after death he earns
Life eternal,-heaven, the phrase be, or
eternal death,-say hell.
As his deeds, so proves his portion, doing
ill or doing well!"

Thus fancy and reason attest another life whose condition is to be determined by the character of the previous life man has lived in the world. Therefore, life is a time of probation given to him to prove his claim to future happiness.

"I have lived, then, done and suffered, loved
and hated, learnt and taught
This--there is no reconciling wisdom with a
world distraught,
Goodness with triumphant evil, power with
failure in the aim,
If-(to my own sense, remember! though none
other feel the same!)
If you bar me from assuming earth to be a
pupil's place,
And life, time-with all their chances,
changes--just probation-space,
Mine, for me."

The idea that life is a time of probation for man to exert his free will, strive, and earn the right to future happiness, renders the following lines from "Rabbi Ben Ezra" more clear and significant:

"Then welcome each rebuff,
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand
but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never
grudge the throe."

A study of Robert Browning the Singer would not be complete without an explanation of his use of rhyme and metre. Since all are endowed by nature with a sense of rhythm, and all life is founded on rhythm, Browning's idea of the use of both these elements will help to a better comprehension of his art. Throughout the nineteenth century the study of phonetics and the advance of knowledge in the aesthetic element of all art had a marked influence on Browning, Tennyson, Rossetti, and Swinburne. It was becoming clear that rhythm was a fundamental thing, and that the patterns which were possible to express that rhythm were numberless. Because poetry is the result of direct and spontaneous inspiration, it should not be limited by the rules of the metrist. Such a course might interfere with the discharge of the function of poetry, which is, in common with all other arts, an appeal to the imagination and feeling.

As the painter seeks expression through line and color, and the musician through sound, the poet seeks it in the blending of the harmony and the significance of words. If an impediment is placed in the way of sound and sense, poetry fails in the perfect discharge of its function, and may miss that appeal to the imagination and feeling which produces universality, its most distinguishing quality.

Browning was a musician, not of the same high degree as he was poet, yet sufficiently conversant with the laws of music to relate methods for effect, and to rebel against an arbitrary law which would contravene such methods by overemphasizing metre at the expense of sense. He believed that metrical language had a double appeal, to the senses and to the intellect. As the intellectual element becomes more prominent, the ideal pattern demands an increasing amount of attention. Browning has committed violations against the laws of metre, but it has been done only in the case of usual metres, and for the sole purpose of breaking monotony or of strengthening effect. He was neither ignorant nor unconscious of patterns of measure, but his object was to match metre to sense, and this alone would justify his harsh, rugged verse to express virile thought, as it justifies light, flowing metre to express lyrical thought. Sound and sense must be in harmony, but a time inevitably comes when Browning

sacrifices sound to sense. Much of Browning's verse which has been pronounced bad, is in reality only unusual. Sacrifice sound for sense, and poetry is bad; sacrifice sense for sound, and the result is affectation and conscious ornament. Sound must coincide with the ideas, images, and suggestions of the words.

This theory of poetry, held as peculiarly Browning's called down on him the approbation as well as the condemnation of critics, and has divided even to the present the ranks of lovers of poetry. Professor Phelps of Yale says: "That much of his (Browning's) so-called obscurity, harshness, and uncouthness falls immediately into its proper place, is indeed necessary. The proof of his true greatness not as a philosopher, thinker, psychologist, but as a poet, lies in the simple fact that when the subject-matter he handles is beautiful or sublime, his style is usually adequate to the situation. Browning had no difficulty in writing melodiously when he placed the posy in the Ring,

"O lyric Love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire."

Life has its trivialities and its ugliness, as well as its sublime aspirations. Whenever the thought in Browning's poetry rises, the style automatically rises with it."¹

¹ William Lyon Phelps, "Robert Browning: How to Know Him". Page 44.

Gilbert Chesterton corroborates Professor Phelps's testimony when he says: "The admirer disparages poetry in order to exalt Browning; and all the time Browning himself exalted poetry above all earthly things, served it with single-hearted intensity, and stands among the few poets who hardly wrote a line of anything else."¹ Another critic, however, adverse to Browning's theory of poetry, said after the poem "Pauline" had been published: "You are, beyond all question, as mad as Cassandra, without any of the power to prophesy like her, or to construct a connected sentence like anybody else. We have already had a Monomaniac; and we designate you 'The Mad Poet of the Batch'; as being mad not in one direction only, but in all. A little lunacy, like a little knowledge, would be a dangerous thing."² No less a critic than Stopford Brooke censures Browning for his tendency to exaggerate peculiarities into defects, and passes the following criticism: "Browning was far too careless of his melody. He frequently sacrificed it, and needlessly, to his thought. He may have imagined that he strengthened the thing he thought by breaking the melody. He did not, he injured it. He injured the melody also by casting in- to the middle of it, like stones into a clear water, rough parenthetical sounds to suit his parenthetical phrases.

¹G. K. Chesterton, "Robert Browning". Page 17.

²"Frazer's Magazine" for December, 1833.

He breaks it sometimes into two with violent clanging words, with discords which he does not resolve, but forgets. And in the pleasure he took in quaint oddities of sound, in jarring tricks with his metre, in fantastic and difficult arrangement of rhyme, in scientific displays of double rhymes, he, only too often, immolates melody on the altar of his own cleverness.¹

Because Browning kept sense and sound so closely allied, his poetry had an effect that repelled readers in general. Yet, a brief examination of his use of metre will show that he used it, as all metre should be used, to express the spirit of the poem. An apparent fault sometimes appears a real excellence when the true spirit of a passage has been really understood. "A Woman's Last Word" is a simple poem which lessens in expressiveness if the true metre is lost sight of. The use of the trochee in many of Browning's poems gives the impression of loving entreaty. Moreover, if the accent falls on the first word of the line, it adds intensity and tender persuasion:

"Be a god, and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man, and fold me
With thine arm!"

"In a Year" has the same foot and length to convey bursts of passion from an overburdened heart. Again the trochaic foot and very short line emphasize the subjective element.

¹Stopford A. Brooke, "The Poetry of Robert Browning".
Page 53.

"Dear, the pang is brief,
 Do thy part,
 Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
 Grows belief!
 Well, this cold clay clod
 Was man's heart:
 Crumble it, and what comes next?
 Is it God?"

"Hervé Riel" is in trochaic movement. It is heroic, but not iambic. In the beginning of the poem the mood is one of anxiety, suspense, and fear of the loss of the fleet. When hope asserts itself again, Herve Riel is introduced in the words,

"For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these." The line is one of mixed anapestic and iambic feet, to express resolution, courage, and confidence; so with the first and second lines of the sixth stanza to express indignation at the pilots

"And 'What mockery or malice have we here?'
 cries Hervé Riel:
 Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you
 cowards, fools, or rogues?"

This is true likewise in much of his speech to the admirals. "The Last Ride To-gether" is iambic to express nobility of the hero, his endurance, his courage, and his self-control. This poem requires a very decided touch upon the strong foot in order to stress the iambic movement. The two, three, or four long syllables at the first of many lines show passion and intense control,

"My whole heart rises up to bless
 Your name in pride and thankfulness!
 Take back the hope you gave,--"

The most completely spondaic line indicates deliberation, patience, and intense feeling,

"Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs,"
 and then the short syllables and lyric effect in the next line is contrasted,

"When pity would be softening through."

In Browning's "Prospice", the iambic is predominant to express heroic endurance and courage in meeting death. The first foot is a spondee, and indicates deliberation. It emphasizes the fact that the man is bracing himself to face the fight. The occasional spondees in "Abt Vogler" give dignity and weight, and stress contemplation and reverent meditation. "My Last Duchess" seems to be written in stilted blank verse, possibly to show the domineering and tyrannical spirit of the Duke. The irregularity of the feet is expressive of his thinking and feeling. In "Evelyn Hope" Browning has used the trochee to convey the idea of tender love and feeling, but in stanza three, he changes to the iambics for conviction and confidence.

"For God above
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
 And creates the love to reward the love:
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake."

No better illustration of the use of sound to express sense occurs in Browning's poetry than that found in the last stanza of "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha." As the church is emptied of worshippers, and the sacristan is extinguishing the lights for the night, the organist, alone in the loft, asks for five minutes' grace to repair a pedal. However, not the pedal of the organ, but the fugues of the dead composer, Master Hugues, are claiming his attention and challenging his power. The organist's attempt to render adequately the simple, yet subtle and evasive fugue, fails; and he is about to desist and blare out the mode Palestrina, when the wick in the socket burns out. Angry because of his unsuccessful attempt, and filled with chagrin at the sudden darkness which interrupted him, the organist calls out harshly to the sacristan,

....."Lo you, the wick in the socket!
 Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
 Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
 What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
 Sweeping the church up for first morning-
 prayers,
 And find a poor devil has ended his cares
 At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled
 stairs?
 Do I carry the moon in my pocket?"

These illustrations are sufficient to show that Browning was a careful metrist. Innumerable others which prove his truthfulness to genuine poetic principle might be mentioned, such as the double endings continuously in "Agamemnon" to reproduce the extended measure of the Greek

iambic trimeter; Browning's own measure, dactyls and spondees, in "Pheidippides" where each line ends with a half foot or pause, to give the impression of firm, continuous, and rhythmic motion for exalted sentiment and heroic character; and alternate hexameter and pentameter in "Ixion" to imitate the turning of the wheel to which Ixion is bound.

Since Browning proclaimed poetry the best birth-right of man, and the medium of all that is best and most important in life, he paid no less attention to rhyme as a vital element in the technique of his art than to rhythm and sense. Browning was master of rhyme; and only when he wished a fantastic effect to surprise and amuse, did he violate its rules. Here, too, the sense is likely to be sacrificed for it. The rhyme of "My Last Duchess" and "Count Gismond" are difficult, because it is cleverly obscured by "run-on" lines. If read with proper emphasis and expression, they might be taken for blank verse. The following is an example of this point from "My Last Duchess":

"Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my Lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:' such
stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
 For calling up that spot of joy. She had
 A heart--how shall I say?--too soon made glad,
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere."

In "Count Gismond" the rhyme is singularly obscured
 by "run-on" lines, though they are much shorter. For
 example:

"Till out strode Gismond, then I knew
 That I was saved. I never met
 His face before, but, at first view,
 I felt quite sure that God had set
 Himself to Satan; who would spend
 A minute's mistrust on the end?"

The following lines from "Easter Day" form couplets
 which run easily into jingle. There are eight successive
 lines with no pause at the end; an excellent illustration
 of Browning's careful art.

 "And as I said
 This nonsense, throwing back my head
 With light complacent laugh, I found
 Suddenly all the midnight round
 One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
 As made up of a multitude
 Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
 Of ripples infinite and black,
 From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
 Like horror and astonishment,
 A fierce vindictive scribble of red
 Quick flames across, as if one said
 (The angry scribe of Judgment) "There--
 Burn it!"

Though this kind of rhyming is difficult, Browning
 made extensive use of it, and employed the "end-stopt"
 form only when the effect of the rhyme as rhyme is to
 be brought out, in addition to the metre or rhythm; as
 in "How They Brought the Good News" and in "Cavalier
 Songs."

Certain critics have accused Browning of many faulty rhymes, but his percentage of such rhymes is smaller by actual count than that in the average of the best poets. Browning has but few of the "eye-rhymes" such as "dull" and "full", "lone" and "gone". Browning's worst rhymes, and they are very few in number, are "quiescence", "presence"; "light", "infinite"; "comes", "glooms". His imperfect rhymes occur in passages that are more or less sportive, familiar, and written in a free, easy style.

Similarly double rhymes are used with fine effect by Browning in serious poems in trochaic measure, especially lyrical poems; as in the song in "The Blot in the 'Scutcheon", "There's a woman like a dewdrop."

In lighter poems, like "The Glove" and "The Flight of the Duchess", the effect of the double and triple rhymes is in keeping with the easy style of the story. In both poems Browning changes from double to single rhymes to distinguish between the earnestness of one passage and the cynical wit of the rest. It is clear, therefore, that as a singer, Browning not only went to the deepest, and most serious truths of life for his themes, but when he had chosen them he clothed them in the most becoming garb of rhythm and metre. Lapses from this high standard can be found, but the breaches

Certain critics have accused Browning of many family rhymes, but his percentage of such rhymes is smaller by actual count than that in the average of the best poets. Browning has but few of the "eye-rhymes" such as "dull" and "will", "land" and "hand", "mother" and "providence", "presence"; "light", "little"; "corps", "glance". His least frequent rhymes occur in passages that are more or less apologetic, justified, and written in a free, easy style.

Similarly double rhymes are used with fine effect by Browning in several poems in dramatic measure, especially lyrical ones; as in the sonnet "The Bird in the Bush", "There's a woman lives a death", "In hidden poems, like 'The Glove' and 'The Light of the Duchess'. The effect of the double and triple rhymes is to keep the easy style of the story.

In both poems Browning announces from double to triple rhymes to distinguish between the earnestness of one passage and the cynical wit of the next. It is clear, therefore, that as a stylist, Browning was only what the demand, and not a victim of it. He was not a victim of it, but when he had chosen that he clothed them in the most perfect path of rhythm and metre, far from this high standard can be found, but the presence

of his art are not of more consequence than those of other poets. Had it not been for the obscurity of which he was sometimes guilty, and the distastefulness of his themes, Browning would have been considered of highest excellence in his artistic execution.

The storm of opposition which greeted Browning's poetry is a proof of the deep impression which it made. That he failed to please the people is no surprise, since he regarded such an end unworthy of his endeavor. He had experienced life deeply; he had passed through skepticism to atheism, from atheism to pessimism, thence to cynicism, as "Pauline" shows. Through such mental suffering he came to the cure of mind and heart in "Paracelsus", which acknowledges this to be God's world, and us the children of God. If his later poetry radiated optimism, it was no chance conclusion arrived at by an untried soul. No man of Browning's mental calibre could pass through life, as Browning had done, without a definite and just appraisal of things both spiritual and temporal. He pointed out in all his work that the man who lives for the world, does not live at all, because he fails in the comprehension of the purpose of life. Browning wrote to supply men's needs, not to furnish a literary narcotic for them; for he knew men. It was at no time his aim to give them merely what they wished. He understood men, even though they did not understand

him. Browning stood alone on the high plane of philosophical and psychological research, sending out one challenge after another, to rouse the people to a sense of their spiritual danger. In the unwelcome task of disclosing to man the innermost workings of his heart and their logical sequence, only Newman, of all the great men of that day, approached Browning in his far-reaching influence in spreading the light. Both longed to inculcate in the souls of men the desire for high and noble achievement, both had to win over the unwilling, and conquer the prejudice which was causing men to turn their backs on painful truths. Long and steady opposition seemed to increase Browning's purpose, and bring greater power to bear on his uncompromising will to be heard.

The chief value of Browning's poetry is the religious and philosophical note which dominates it. The desire to behold the things of this world in the light of eternity is the vital element that must distinguish the great poem and book, and insure their permanence in the sphere of literature. A poem can not be a true and comprehensive interpretation of life if it lacks the religious impulse, which is the most significant aspect of life itself. Whatever a poet's philosophy, whatever his ideal in life, his poem can not be great unless it is essentially true to the life of man. Great literature in every form springs from

the heart of a man of sympathy and vision, a man who understands life and feels deeply concerning life.

The man to whom the world turns in time of need is the man who, while living in time, draws his strength from eternity. Such a man was Robert Browning. His poetry reflects his own nature, and possesses, therefore, the enduring appeal which has defied the most searching and decisive critics, and which has led Time to decree that his poetry shall live.

An attempt at fair judgment of Browning's literary works recalls the words of Anatole France, that criticism is essentially autobiographical. It is consistent, therefore, that the critic who regards religion as a delusion or a superstition should denounce Browning as the prince of imposters, a charlatan in the literary field, and false to the real principles of life. Any appeal of poetry to fineness, sublimity, and beauty must fail in so barren a soul, for such a man harbors none of the reflection of the Ideal Beauty in his heart. He resembles the man who, looking at the cathedral window, sees but the dark and blotchy exterior, unable or unwilling to see from within its radiance and beauty. Yet the thoughtful man shrinks from the cold, erroneous judgment of such a critic, and still clings irresistibly to the idea that the beauty of a poem is necessarily a fleeting and imperfect reflection of the Face of the Creator Himself. Thus there can be no place

in poetry, "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge",¹ for the charlatan; the standard is too high and too strict. Saint Beuve relates that Napoleon once asked incredulously, "Where is there not charlatanism?" "In politics, in the art of governing mankind," Saint Beuve answered, "it is perhaps true that there is charlatanism. But in the order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal honor is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man's being."² Charlatanism strives to confuse the true and the sound with the untrue and the unsound, but their clear distinction is of supreme importance in all great literature. The very nature of the "vates" as poet, and the source of the inspiration of his art, forbid charlatanism to enter the domain of poetry, or to obstruct or destroy the characteristics which mark its high destiny.

One of Browning's claims to greatness is that he did not seek to elevate man by establishing him in an ideal state outside his world; but he drew beauty for men from their most commonplace surroundings, and clothed them with their rightful dignity as creatures of God, destined for immortality. Above all else he showed them the great truth that beauty must be found within oneself,

¹Wordsworth.

²Matthew Arnold, "Essays in Criticism," "The Study of Poetry".

if it is to be found in the world. With touches of subtlety and genius, and with a wealth of ideas whose rapidity outran the speed of his pen, causing bewilderment to his readers, he attacked life from all angles as the great poet should.

"And then thou said'st a perfect bard
 was one
 Who chronicled the stages of all
 life."

However lowly or exalted man's station in life, he must not fail in the purpose of his creation. Each day must count toward final perfection; each soul must realize for itself the truth of the old Persian proverb, weighted with the wisdom of ages, "If you would be rich, spread wide your skirt, for heaven is raining gold." This was Browning's attitude toward life. He caught the moral and spiritual riches which others were rejecting as superfluous or spurious. Browning would have all men partakers, not mere tasters, at the banquet of Life; therefore, each man must realize that his station bore its own characteristic dignity. To bring home to men's mind the beauty in common things is a work of rare power, and has succeeded only in rare instances. Such power Browning had, and this, with his success in reproducing the most of life, makes him great.

Browning's poetry is truly great in the interpretative power which it possessed, to make man experience and under-

It is to be found in the world. With teachers of
 and teachers, and with a spirit of ideas which
 resist the power of his law, and his law is
 sent to his teacher, he attacked life with all his
 at the great and simple.

"And then there said a student that
 was one
 who controlled the power of all
 life."

However, there is a great deal of life in life. He said
 that in the power of his law. Then he said
 could have been that each and every
 for itself the truth of the law is power. He said
 of all the wisdom of man. "If you would be wise, stand
 like your spirit. The law is the law." This was
 Browning's attitude toward life. He saw the power of
 individual power which others were not seeing. He
 was of course. Browning would have all men to be
 and were teachers. At the heart of life; therefore, each
 man must realize that his law is the law of his
 into himself. To bring home to man's mind the power in
 common things is a work of love, and has succeeded
 only in rare instances. Such power Browning had, and this
 with his power in understanding the rest of life, makes
 his great.

Browning's poetry is truly great in the interpretative
 power which it possesses. He takes man's experience and order-

stand life at all its vital points. When art stifles within man the processes of thinking and he ends his experience with no inspiration to continue his best effort, no ability to see more clearly into the future, its true reason for being is defeated; its purpose fails. But if art in any field spurs man onward, if it brings to life his dormant thoughts and emotions, and helps him to live more fully, then that art has performed its function, and is genuine in its nature. This power of Browning is recognizable in Matthew Arnold's words: "The grand power of poetry is its interpretative power; by which I mean, not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them. When this sense is awakened in us, as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us as no other can."¹ When man awakens thus, the world with all its new meaning seems to be his, and life is richer for the new and deep interpretation which poetry has given it. The true sense

¹"Essays in Criticism"--"Maurice de Guérin".

of animals, water, and plants, comes not from Linnaeus, Cavendish, or Cuvier, but from Shakespeare who says,

"daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and
take
The winds of March with beauty;"

or from Wordsworth, with his

"voice....heard
In the springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides;"

or Keats, who says

"moving waters at their priestlike task
Of cold ablution round Earth's human shores."

These are eminent manifestations of the magical power of poetry to interpret the natural world. Its power to interpret the moral world is equally great. Genuine poetry strives to make near and real the life of Nature, and the life of man. Not only had Browning's poetry the magical note of nature when he sings,

"The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven--
All's right with the world!"

but it possessed in the fullest degree the moral profundity of which Arnold speaks.¹ As in all Browning's poetry both qualities exist, but the moral ends by making itself master over the natural. Thus Browning's work il-

¹"Essays in Criticism", "Maurice de Guerin", Matthew Arnold.

luminate man, and gives him a sense of the reality of things. It reconciles him with himself and with the universe.

When Carlyle bade the poet go to the soul of man for inspiration and harmony, he was but re-expressing the conviction of Hegel who held a similar belief. Hegel says, "The poet must have lived in and noted by the imaginative process the impulses, aims, and activities of the human soul."¹ This he considered necessary if the poet would "reveal to the mind the essence of things."² Moreover, Hegel adds, "The true poet possesses always the sense of the eternal beauty."³ The artistic imagination which Hegel imposes on the poet as a vital element strengthens the idea of Ruskin on this point. Granted the truth of Carlyle's assertion that the soul of man is the proper theme of true poetry, Aristotle's statement that all great poetry must have the attributes of depth and seriousness, and Ruskin's idea of the importance of the artistic imagination in poetry, then Browning is a great poet. This last quality of the artistic imagination at work with his intelligence showed Browning that the truths of man's soul were the themes in which he was interested, and that from them only he could derive the inspiration which he sought. His im-

¹J. S. Kedney, "Hegel's Aesthetics"--Page 102.

²Ibid--Page 101.

³Ibid--Page 106.

agination helped him to comprehend his close union with all mankind, and gave him a more intimate share in their sufferings, joys, and aspirations. Having lived deeply, he was fit to express the mysteries of life, and to get a conception of the profound and ideal harmony at its depth.

The complete merging of the subjective and objective elements, the union of which produces originality, was so predominant in Browning's processes of thinking, that when he seized on a concrete idea, he saw to the soul of it. He was then able skilfully to develop that idea in all its parts so as to give one impression only as he sent it forth from his mind. This rare gift is probably explainable in the words of Emerson that "the man of genius who abandons his heart to the Supreme Mind, finds himself related to all its works and travels a royal road to particular knowledges and powers."¹ Browning's power of penetrating, merging, and re-creating was very keen, and brought his art up to a high degree of excellence. He above all other poets of his time possessed not only the artistic imagination which Hegel emphasizes, but this other quality of originality which Hegel deems no less important.

An estimate of Browning's poetry without due

¹ Emerson's Critical Essay--"The Over-Soul".

regard for the religious element which pervades it is as futile as it is misleading. Yet to search his poetry for dogma is to wring the very heart's blood from it. Rather than preacher or teacher, Browning was pre-eminently a singer, one who sang because the fullness of time demanded articulate expression. It fell to him, who had seen and heard, and into whose heart the true meaning of life had entered, to make known his attitude toward and concern for the future life, and to raise men's souls through knowledge and power to greater heights. He saw the spiritual realities behind the material realities, lifted the curtain from the material to reveal the deep eternal meanings, thereby helping men to ultimate union with God. Edwin Markham, speaking of the function of poetry, writes thus, "It is said that poetry comes to increase our delight in life and to widen our joys in the meanings of the world; she comes also as a great awakening force, a great spiritual force, a force that builds character, that broadens our sympathies and helps to inspire and support the soul in its struggle with the doubts and despairs of our existence."¹ Browning has purged life of its meannesses and deceits, he has stripped it of its trappings, and he has directed man to the true fountain of wisdom,

¹Edwin Markham, "Defining the Indefinable."
The Poetry Review--September and October, 1929.

which is knowledge of self. He has sung the great struggles of mankind at the tensest moments of their existence, for it is at such a time that God manifests Himself in and through man. Thus Browning looked to the heart of things, thought deeply and seriously, heard the melody at the centre of the universe, of which Carlyle speaks, and raised his voice in song. Having fulfilled all the conditions which the masters have laid down for poetic excellence, it is safe to say that the Browning that will live is unquestionably Browning the Singer.

which is knowledge of self. He has found the great
strength of feeling at the present moment of their
existence, for it is at such a time that the greatest
himself is not known. This Browning looks to
the heart of things, through things and actions,
and the subject of the universe, of
which things are, and which are void in soul.
Having realized all the possibilities of the universe
have into himself the great void, it is not a
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SUMMARY

Among all the poets in English literature the position of Robert Browning is the most debatable. There are some who declare him equal to Shakespeare, while others charge him with charlatanism, and score him for his willful obscurity. Browning was unquestionably a true poet by the standards of the best judges; and although probably careless at times of his literary expression, it was more because of his swift and discursive style than by any intention to offend against a definite poetic law.

Browning fulfilled in his own nature that of the "vates" of whom Carlyle speaks in "Heroes and Hero-Worship". If we assert that Browning was chiefly a singer, rather than preacher and teacher, the pronouncements of such critics as Carlyle, Ruskin, and Aristotle will bear out our statement. Like the "vates", Browning goes to the soul of man and the universe, seeks out in the purity of his own nature the mysteries which lie hidden there, catches their melody, and then interprets those secrets and mysteries with their inherent melody in terms of his own high and truthful nature.

SUMMARY

Among all the poets in English literature the position of Robert Browning is the most debated. There are those who regard him as a minor poet, while others regard him with enthusiasm, and some him for his artistic obscurity. Browning was unquestionably a true poet by the standards of the best judges; and although some of his earlier work is of a less than perfect quality, it was more because of his self and his style than by any intention to offend against artistic poetic law.

Browning fulfilled in his own nature that of the "poet" at which Carlyle speaks in "Heroes and Hero-Worship". It is a secret that Browning was chiefly a singer, rather than a thinker and teacher, the preponderance of which critics as Carlyle, Emerson, and Alcott will bear out our statement. Like the "poet", Browning was in the world of his own and his private, but in the world of his own nature the mysterious which is hidden there, carries their melody, and when interpreted these secrets and mysteries with their inherent melody in terms of his own high and true

The source of Browning's inspiration, therefore, led him into the psychological and philosophical field, hitherto unexplored territory in poetry. His choice of themes was distasteful to readers, and this fact, together with the medium of expression which he adopted, the dramatic monologue, made his poems difficult of comprehension. This lack of clearness was augmented greatly by his peculiar style, his mannerisms, digressions, and allusions. Yet Browning would no doubt have lost his identity, had he written away from the style which pre-eminently characterizes him.

Another factor which placed Browning beyond the acceptance of the people was the unpleasant contrast between his poetry and that of Tennyson. Tennyson had always been popular because of his soothing appeal. He re-expressed current thought readily and easily, he was careful of every detail of technique. His pleasant, comfortable portrayal of English life and customs, aroused no opposition by the difficulty of the manner or the matter of his work. Browning, on the other hand, held the mirror up to nature, upset man's complacency in temporal and spiritual affairs, pointing out and exempli-

The source of Browning's inspiration, there-
fore, led him into the psychological and philoso-
phical study, his poetic imagination is poetry.
His choice of themes was dictated by his taste, and
his taste, as we know, was the result of education
which he acquired, the dramatic technique, made his
poetry different from that of his contemporaries. His lack of
element was suggested directly by his position
style, his romanticism, his dramatic, and his
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Another factor which placed Browning beyond
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Tennyson had always been popular because of his
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quality and quality, he was a poet of every detail
of technique. His pleasant, comfortable poetry
of English life and culture, presented no obstacle
to the popularity of the masses of the nation of his
time. Browning, on the other hand, held the mirror
up to nature, and what nature's ugliness in nature
and what of life, pointing out and exposing

fying man's best and worst impulses.

Browning was guided in his choice of theme by the inadequacy of the literature of his day to battle the new scientific and industrial movement, and to guide the people to right thinking on the vital phases of life. The age which had produced such men as Huxley, Darwin, Tyndall, and Haeckel, was paying homage to them as leaders of religious thought rather than as exponents of deep scientific research. Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman, Arnold, and Browning all attempted by their sane thinking and writing to counteract the baneful influence of the new movement which had come to wield a power subversive to the welfare of society; and while the use of steam and electricity was advancing rapidly, and the habits and ideas of the people were changing in re-adjustment to new standards, the wealth of the people, which increased with the extension of the new thought and inventions, saw the decrease in the happiness and well-being of a formerly contented people. A spirit of pessimism, rife among the working classes, who had become the victims of science and industry, was the chief characteristic of the new age. In general, life was losing the

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...science and industry, was the chief cause of the
...of the new age. In general, life was losing the

harmony between body and soul which even the ancients recognized as necessary to the full development of the man.

To recount Browning's edifying beliefs in contrast to the new thought would be a task of incomparable length; but it is significant to note that while the people were changing religious doctrines to meet the demands of the new era, Browning clung tenaciously to the old dogmas of what many called a "worn-out" Christianity. Had he but obtained the hearing which he deserved, his own sincerity would have been a tremendous influence to guide their minds into better and safer channels of thought. He taught the sanctity of human life, the value of life as a period of probation, the love of the Creator for his creatures, the significance of death and the certainty of happiness in a future life for the just soul. His philosophy of life was one of optimism, not because of expediency, but because he saw to the heart of the problem of life, and still believed that life was good.

The mastery of Browning over metre and rhyme was co-extensive with the beauty of his

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The history of Browning's over

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thought. Although some critics have charged him with needless abruptness and ruggedness, others have upheld him in his theory as to what metre and rhyme should express. Browning's use of the "run-on" rather than the "end-stopt" lines shows him to be a more careful, and even a more fastidious artist, than he is commonly adjudged. The average of his faulty rhymes is no greater than that of other great poets. His arrangement of rhyme is often so skilfully thought out that careful reading makes it appear perfect blank verse. This mastery of rhyme, however, never obstructed in its play the thought; but, like metre, was subordinated to the sense which he wished to convey. Sense was Browning's first concern; both elements must serve their fullest expression.

Though Browning has often exaggerated the peculiarities of his style into defects, he must, nevertheless, be acclaimed a great poet. His psychological and philosophical approach to his work brought into action a high degree of artistic imagination and originality not found in any other poet of his time. His themes on the deep mysteries of life voice eternal

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The evidence of his feeling for words is the greater than
that of other great poets. His arrangement of
words is often as carefully thought out as that
of any other writer. He makes it a point of study
to use the most effective words. This mastery of style, however, never
obscured in his eyes the beauty of the thought. His
style, was subordinated to the sense which he
wished to convey. Hence was Browning's style
so direct, so clear, so free from any affectation
or artificiality.

Though Browning has often exaggerated
the individualism of his style, and
in some instances, he has used a great
deal of psychological and philosophical
speculation in his work, and even a high
degree of scientific exactness and exactness has
been found in some of his work. His theory
of the best expression of his verse is central.

truth, as the power was given to Browning to understand it. His search for the truths of life disclosed the harmony of the universe. Their charm, which he felt so joyously within himself, he interpreted for others through his poetry.

The opposition which Browning met in his efforts to rouse the people to an alertness of mind concerning their danger, proves that he must have been heard to a far greater extent than at that time seemed probable. His persistence in writing for men as he knew them, in giving them what they needed, rather than what they wished, widened the breach between him and his public. Opposition and disfavor seemed to strengthen his determination to continue as he had begun, and to show that there was unquestionably much worth in his poetry.

The truth and seriousness of Browning's poetry, those qualities which Aristotle said must pervade all great art, forbids the entrance of charlatanism. According to the statement of Anatole France that all criticism is autobiographical, those who find charlatanism in Browning's poetry, fail to see the significance of the dom-

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The opposition was in Browning and in his
self. It was the sense of the people to an alienation of
the world, their danger, their loss, and
which have been heard to a far greater extent
than at that time seemed probable. His guests
were in waiting for him as in the West, in the
and they needed, rather than that they should
be the same between him and the world. The
and whatever seemed to be a part of his
condition to be considered as he had begun, and to
show that there was undoubtedly much work in
his poetry.
The truth and earnestness of Browning's
poetry, those qualities which Aristotle said
first moved all great art, found in the entire
of his life. According to the statement of
his friends that his poetry is entirely con-
sistent, those who find consolation in Browning's
poetry, feel to see the significance of the con-

inant religious note because of its absence in their own lives. The greatest poetry possesses a deep spiritual note, because it is precisely that which lends it depth and meaning. Poetry, if it would be truly great, must give an intimate glimpse of life's secrets. Browning awakens the power which man possesses, unknown to himself, and who consequently lives more fully in the consciousness of the potential beauty and happiness of life.

It is clear, therefore, that in spite of obvious faults, Browning attains the plane of the great poet. His poetry is noble and inspiring, with the depth and seriousness of soul-life as its dominating power. He has interpreted God and the universe in such a manner as to uplift man's spirit to a recognition of its true force in the world, and has brought to man a knowledge of the harmony which exists within himself. The place of Robert Browning the Singer is, therefore, safe in the world of poetry.

in its religious note because of its attitude
toward life. The greatest poetry possesses
a deep spiritual basis. Because it is essentially
that which leads to death and meaning. Poetry
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of life's mystery. Browning makes the
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